

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 AID-05 PC-05 /077 W
-----070298 061443Z /44

R 061138Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4518
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 9564

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PINT IN PK
SUBJECT: INDIAN PRESS COMMENT ON EVENTS IN PAKISTAN

1. ALL DELHI PAPERS ON JULY 6 CARRIED FRONT-PAGE HEADLINES ON MILITARY TAKEOVER IN PAKISTAN. NONE CARRIED REPORTS FROM ISLAMABAD, HOWEVER, LEAD ARTICLES DREW FROM SAMACHAR REPORTS AND GENERALLY WERE FACTUAL ACCOUNTS OF THE MILITARY TAKEOVER, ARREST OF BHUTTO AND OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES, AND MAIN POINTS OF GENERAL ZIA'S BROADCAST LATER ON JULY 5. ALL PAPERS ALSO CARRIED A SAMACHAR ARTICLE, EITHER SEPARATELY OR AS PART OF LEAD ARTICLES, WHICH ESSENTIALLY REHASHED THE EVENTS SINCE THE MARCH ELECTIONS, RETRACED PAKISTAN'S PREVIOUS HISTORY OF MILITARY RULE, AND GAVE BRIEF BIOS OF BHUTTO AND GENERAL ZIA. THIS SAMACHAR BACKGROUND PIECE OPENED WITH THE STATEMENT THAT THE MILITARY TAKEOVER "HAD BEEN IN THE MAKING" EVER SINCE BHUTTO ASSUMED POWER IN 1971. IT IMPLIED THAT HIS MANIPULATION OF THE ARMY AND TREATMENT OF ITS SENIOR OFFICERS OVER THE YEARS FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL
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ENDS CREATED RESENTMENT IN ARMY RANKS AND MADE IT INEVITABLE THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY STEP IN. SAMACHAR ADDED: "THE PROCESS WAS ONLY ACCELERATED BY THE POLITICAL CRISIS THAT FOLLOWED THE MARCH GENERAL ELECTIONS."

2. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE PRESS HAS VARIED IN ITS EMPHASIS, BUT MOST ALL PAPERS AGREED THAT NOT ENOUGH

IS YET KNOWN ABOUT THE PERSONALITIES AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE MILINARY RULERS. SOME PAPERS (PRO-CPI "PATRIOT", PRO-CONGRESS "NATIONAL HERALD" AND THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES") SEE THE MILITARY TAKEOVER AS A REVERSION TO A FAMILIAR PATTERN IN PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL LIFE. THESE EDITORIALS SEE THE JULY 5 EVENTS AS A "GRAVE SETBACK TO THE SYSTEM OF CIVILIAN RULE WITH WHICH MR. BHUTTO HAD BEEN EXPERIMENTING SINCE 1971" ("HINDUSTAN TIMES") AND AS AN INDICATION THAT "DEMOCRACY...HAS COME TO AN END" IN PAKISTAN, THUS "MARKING THE END OF A PROMISING PERIOD" IN THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY ("NATIONAL HERALD"). THE "TIMES OF INDIA" EDITORIALY WONDERED IF THE NEW MILITARY RULERS WILL UPHOLD THEIR PROMISE TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER, SINCE "MANY OTHER ARMY LEADERS HAVE MADE SIMILAR PROMISES ELSEWHERE." THE "TIMES" ALSO PLACED FULL BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INTERVENTION ON BHUTTO, SAYING THAT HE HAS CONSISTENTLY TRIED TO DESTROY DEMOCRACY DURING HIS RULE AND THAT HE DELIVERED THE "FINAL BLOW...WHEN HE ORGANIZED OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCED IN A MASSIVE RIGGING" OF THE MARCH ELECTIONS. THE "STATESMAN" BLAMED BHUTTO FOR TRYING TO EXPLOIT CONTRADICTIONS IN THE PNA OPPOSITION AND AMBITIONS IN THE ARMED FORCES TO PRESERVE HIS POSITION, WHILE THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES" WROTE THAT HE HAD LOST THE TRUST OF THE ARMY "PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF HIS INCREASINGLY VOCAL ANTI-US STANCE." THE SAME EDITORIAL BLAMED THE UNCLASSIFIED

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OPPOSITION AS WELL FOR ITS "EXCESSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH MINUTE DETAILS" IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH BHUTTO. SEVERAL PAPERS SPECULATED THAT GENERAL TIKKA KHAN MAY HAVE PLAYED A BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN THE MILITARY'S ACTION. FEW PAPERS VENTURED TO SPECULATE ON BHUTTO'S FUTURE; ONLY THE "STATESMAN" EDITORIALIZED THAT HE IS "MOST UNLIKELY...TO BE ALLOWED TO PLAY ANOTHER ROUND." SIMILARLY, ONLY THE PRO-CPI "PATRIOT" SPECULATED ON THE FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS, SAYING THAT INDO-PAK RELATIONS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED "NORMALLY" FOR THE PAST YEAR AND "IT IS THE HOPE OF MOST PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY THAT THIS WILL CONTINUE, WHOEVER IT BE WHO IS THE BOSS IN ISLAMABAD."

3. ACCORDING TO USIS CALCUTTA, TWO BENGALI-LANGUAGE PAPERS IN CALCUTTA ON JULY 6 ALLEGED OR IMPLIED US CONNECTION WITH THE ARMY TAKEOVER. "DAINIK BASUMATI", CONTROLLED BY THE CPM-LED WEST BENGAL STATE GOVERNMENT, CARRIED A FRONT-PAGE STORY FROM ITS DELHI CORRESPONDENT ALLEGING "SUSPECTED US INVOLVEMENT." NOTING THAT BHUTTO'S ANTI-AMERICAN STATEMENTS AND DESIRE FOR A REPROCESSING PLANT HAVE IRKED WASHINGTON, THE ARTICLE STATES THAT

"LIKE THE PAKISTANI ARMY, THE U.S. WAS ALSO NOT IN FAVOR OF POLITICAL TURMOIL IN PAKISTAN." "JUGANTAR", A PAPER ASSOCIATED WITH THE INDEPENDENT "AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA", CARRIED A STORY WHICH REFERRED TO INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE EVENT BY SAYING THAT "POLITICAL CIRCLES IN DELHI FEEL THAT THE U.S. IS MOST INTERESTED IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF PAKISTAN." NEITHER PAPER CARRIED FURTHER ELABORATIONS ON ALLEGED U.S. CONNECTIONS.GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE09564
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770239-0815
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770788/aaaacyer.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0d7b3570-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1952024
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN PRESS COMMENT ON EVENTS IN PAKISTAN
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IN, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0d7b3570-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009